

Rockville City Police Department

GENERAL ORDER



Subject PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS		Procedure G.O. # 6 - 2
Authorizing Signature	Effective 02-26-10 Revised 02-07-18	Total Pages 10

I. POLICY

- A. The basic function of the communications system is to satisfy the immediate information needs of the Department in the course of its normal daily activities and during emergencies. It is the latter situation that places the greatest demands upon the communications system and tests the capability of the system to fulfill its functions.
- B. The system conveys information from the public to the law enforcement agency through Public Safety Communications personnel, to the officer who responds to the call for assistance, to other law enforcement and public service agencies, and to information storage facilities and retrieval systems. The speed and accuracy with which information flows through each system component is a measure of the agencies' capability to respond to the needs of the community.

II. PURPOSE

This General Order establishes procedures for the evaluation of calls for police service to determine if a patrol unit should be dispatched. It also establishes a reasonable response time expectation for the caller, thereby enhancing the Department's capacity to deliver quality service.

III. GENERAL

- A. Public Safety Communications personnel shall be immediately responsible to the shift commander on whose shift they are working, but are under the direction, supervision and control of the Support Services Coordinator.
- B. The Public Safety Communications Center of the Rockville City Police Department is the main control center for the operations of the Department.
- C. The center provides the Department with access to local, state, and federal criminal justice information systems through its MILES/NCIC (METERS) computer, which is leased, from the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services, State of Maryland.
- D. The Public Safety Communications Center houses several different communications system components such as:

1. Telephone

Emergency and non-emergency telephone communications including reception, analysis, and coordination of all calls received.

2. Two-way radios

Coordination and dispatching of all radio traffic.

3. Teletype and automated data communications equipment.

Provides the Department access to all local, state, and national law enforcement agencies on automated data communications.

4. Alarm monitors

Monitor alarms on City owned buildings.

5. Telecommunications terminal for the hearing impaired.

Permits communications with the Department for hearing impaired persons.

6. Operating procedure manuals and instruction guides explaining detailed operation of the technical equipment located in the communications center are kept on file in the center and are readily accessible to equipment operators. Procedure manuals also provide after hour and emergency contact lists for all City of Rockville departments.

E. A map of the City of Rockville, with the current beats outlined, is maintained on the wall at all times. Maps of all other surrounding counties are also kept in the Public Safety Communications Center.

IV. LICENSING-AND-REGULATION

A. The Department has 24-hour, two-way radio capability providing continuous communication between the communications center and officers.

B. Federal law requires that all radio transmitting equipment within the United States be licensed and operated in accordance with the regulations promulgated by the F.C.C. (Federal Communications Commission).

1. The Department is authorized to operate on certain assigned radio frequencies under a countywide license, which covers the 800 Mhz radio frequencies.

2. All Department radio transmitting equipment for police purposes is covered under this license.

3. A copy of the F.C.C. license must be posted in or at the control site and must be available for inspection at all times. A copy of the license is posted on the wall in the communications center.

- C. Operation of public safety radios is governed by F.C.C. rules and regulations, which include:
 - 1. The restriction of messages to official police business.
 - 2. Absolute prohibition of obscene or profane language.
- D. State and Federal Privacy and Security Statutes prohibit broadcasting an individual's criminal history record (C.H.R.I.) or complete operator's license conviction record.
 - 1. This does not prohibit/preclude broadcast of essential/critical information, i.e., history of assault, armed and dangerous, personal knowledge of suspects tendencies, i.e., "known burglar."
 - 2. Generally, Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) information is considered public information. However, discretion should be used in broadcasting a person's traffic history. It is preferable to summarize a traffic history, i.e., "3 page history" and "X" number of points unless there is a specific need to itemize and detail the history. Outstanding violations requiring immediate action by an officer are broadcasted routinely. MVA information received through the Criminal Justice Information System (CJIS) cannot be used for non-governmental purposes.
 - 3. Police Communications Operators (PCO) and field units are encouraged to exercise the utmost discretion before broadcasting an individual's name on the radio (i.e., complainant, juvenile, arrested suspect).
- E. Besides the radio frequency that the Department is authorized to operate, all mobile and portable radios have the capability of two-way operation with the Montgomery County Police Department's communications center and patrol officers. This allows for the proper coordination and deployment of personnel who work the same beats and also in times of emergencies.

V. AUTHORITY AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- A. The Police Communications component of the Department is incorporated within the Administrative Services Bureau.
- B. Police Communications Operators shall be immediately responsible to the shift supervisor on whose shift they are working, but are under the direction, supervision and control of the Support Services Coordinator.
- C. The PCO has the authority of command staff, which is delegated, to the position by the Chief of Police. Assignments are made based upon classification of the information available on a given situation and then applying appropriate Departmental procedures as described in this General Order.

- D. Ordinarily the PCO is assumed to have a more complete view of field operations, the nature of the call for service, and the availability of resources to meet calls for police service. Shift supervisors may change a PCO directions, however, such changes must be based on knowledge of a situation. The shift supervisor assumes full responsibility for any changes.
- E. The Department maintains a Public Safety Communications Policy Manual, which outlines in a clear and concise manner the primary duties and responsibilities of personnel assigned to the communications center.

VI. SECURITY OF THE PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

- A. To enhance street officer safety and minimize PCO distraction, access to the communications center will be limited to authorized personnel as follows:
 - 1. Sworn personnel of this Department are to conduct their business expeditiously in the Public Safety Communications Center and leave as quickly as possible.
 - 2. Department civilian employees may use the Public Safety Communications Center on an "as required" basis. Whenever possible, other means of communication shall be used to avoid unnecessary physical access to Public Safety Communications Center.
 - 3. Other criminal justice agency personnel and City employees shall conduct their business outside the Public Safety Communications Center using the communication links established for that purpose.
 - 4. If City employees from other departments or other civilians need to enter the Public Safety Communications Center for official purposes, a member of the Department shall escort them. Visitors to the Department are not allowed access.
 - 5. The telephone positions in the Public Safety Communications Center are to be used for the reception and disposition of complaints. Extended conversations for any other purpose are inappropriate.
 - 6. Extended congregating and socializing in the Public Safety Communications Center is not permitted. Shift supervisors will be held accountable for enforcing this policy.
- B. Security measures taken to protect PCOs and communications equipment.
 - 1. The door in the lobby leading to the Public Safety Communications Center will always remain locked.
 - 2. During non-business hours, the lobby doors in the police station will remain locked.
 - 3. The door to the Public Safety Communications Center will remain closed at all times. This

door does not have to be locked.

4. Bullet resistant glass surrounds the Public Safety Communications Center.
 5. All communications equipment is protected by its position within the secure Public Safety Communications Center.
 6. A fully charged portable radio is kept in the Public Safety Communications Center in the event that a problem occurs with the console. The portable radio is programmed with this Department's frequency as well as with the frequency of the Montgomery County Police Department.
 7. The repeater and antenna are located atop 101 Monroe Street and are only accessible by contacting County Security who will provide an escort to the roof.
- C. Back-up systems to provide for continued service.
1. The entire Public Safety Communications Center; lights, computers, console, etc., is connected to a back-up generator located on the top floor of City Hall. Facilities service personnel of the Public Works Department maintain this generator. The equipment is inspected and tested regularly.
 2. The radio console, playback recorder and the C.A.D. computer, are also connected to a separate UPS (uninterrupted power source) system.

VII. TELEPHONE SYSTEMS

- A. The Department uses a multi-line telephone system, which provide ready 24 hour a day access to the Department. All telephone lines into the Public Safety Communications Center are recorded.
- B. The Department maintains a playback recorder attached to the radio console and the telephones in the Public Safety Communications Center.
1. The recorder records each conversation and allows for immediate playback.
 2. The playback recorder serves to assist the dispatcher in the event a message is missed or misunderstood and the dispatcher needs to listen to the conversation immediately to determine what was said.
- C. The Department maintains a 24-hour continuous recording system. This system has the capability of recording all phone calls received on those designated phone lines and all radio transmissions received on our Police Department frequency. These recordings will be kept on a computer drive for a minimum of thirty (30) days. The recorded information will only be made available to accomplish a police purpose.

1. An employee who has cause to have tapes reviewed or saved shall direct a memorandum through the chain of command to their Bureau Commander, stating the reason(s) for having the tape held and reviewed and/or copied and the approximate date and time of the conversation.
2. If the request is approved, the Bureau Commander will arrange to have the tape saved and/or copied by the Support Services Coordinator.
3. Tapes may be requested for the purposes of investigating a complaint, a complaint of misconduct or supervisory review of a subordinate's activities.

VIII. DUTY ROSTER AND PERSONNEL ROSTER

- A. Public Safety Communications personnel will have immediate access to the on-duty shift supervisor. It is the responsibility of the on-duty shift supervisor to remain in contact with the Public Safety Communications Center by radio or by telephone at all times.
- B. The shift commander will provide the dispatcher with a line-up of personnel at the beginning of each shift. This information will be entered into the CAD system.
- C. The Public Safety Communications Center has access to the computerized schedule for all employees, which includes assignment and days off.
- D. PCO's will be provided with a list of the phone numbers of all Department personnel. The Administrative Services Bureau Commander will update this list whenever there is a change.

IX. EXTERNAL SERVICES

- A. A Rolodex containing telephone numbers of emergency service agencies is maintained next to the console for immediate access. This Rolodex is not to be removed from the Public Safety Communications Center for any reason.
- B. Often during a 24-hour day, citizens, officers, etc. request services that this Department does not provide. In order to respond to these requests in an orderly manner, the following procedures will be followed based upon the service requested.

1. Fire/Rescue

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services will be contacted by dialing 9-1-1. If the Fire/Rescue Services are needed for a non-emergency situation then the appropriate phone numbers can be located in the Rolodex.

2. Allied Police Agencies

PCO's frequently receive requests from field units for assistance or service from interacting agencies or their units. Service provided by these agencies shall be secured as follows:

- a. Montgomery County Police: (Staffing assistance, K-9, investigators, etc.) by using the direct tie line to the Montgomery County Emergency Communications Center (ECC) or by calling the specific office. These phone numbers can be located in the Rolodex.
- b. Maryland State Police: (Helicopter, activity on interstate I-270, manpower assistance, etc.) by calling the Rockville Barrack or the helicopter dispatcher. These phone numbers can be located in the Rolodex.
- c. Montgomery County Sheriffs: (staffing assistance, wanted persons, etc.) by calling the Sheriff's Office or contacting the Montgomery County Police Emergency Communications Center Dispatcher via the direct tie line. The number for the sheriff's office is located in the Rolodex.
- d. Other Police Agencies: For any other police agency that needs to be contacted, the number can be located in either the Rolodex or by calling the information number of the phone company (4-1-1) or by using the CAD system.

3. Cab Service

The phone numbers for the local cab companies are located in the Rolodex.

4. Towing Company

Procedures in General Order # 4-14 will be followed.

5. Public Works

After normal business hours the dispatcher may have to contact employees of the Public Works Department. The Public Works Department maintains a crew on an on-call status at all times. The Police Department is provided with an updated list. This list will be maintained in the First Reaction Checklist stand. In order to contact the on-call person the dispatcher should first attempt to call him/her at home and then call their cell phone.

6. Maryland State Highway Department

The phone number is located in the Rolodex

7. Washington Gas and Light (W.G.L.)

The phone number is located in the Rolodex.

8. Washington Sanitation and Sewer Commission (W.S.S.C.)

The phone number is located in the Rolodex.

9. Potomac Electric Power Company (P.E.P.C.O.)

The phone number is located in the Rolodex.

10. Cable Television

The phone number is located in the Rolodex.

11. Verizon Telephone

The phone number is located in the Rolodex.

12. A directory of community and area resources and services will be maintained in the dispatch center. Included in these directories are various public service agencies, medical and mental health services, and other public and private agencies that may be called upon to assist and/or may be used as references by members of this agency.

X. MISDIRECTED EMERGENCY CALLS

In the event the dispatcher receives a call for service that should be directed to another police or fire department, it should be decided first if the call is an emergency.

- A. If the call is an emergency, all pertinent information is taken from the caller and promptly relayed to the appropriate department or agency.
- B. The call may also be transferred to the appropriate agency.

XI. MONITORING SECURITY ALARMS

- A. The Rockville City Police Department does not monitor private security alarms nor do they allow alarms to directly dial the Police Department.
- B. Public Safety Communications personnel will, however, monitor alarms on City owned buildings.
- C. Public Safety Communications personnel will also receive calls for assistance from private security

companies that handle burglary and holdup alarms for businesses, financial institutions, and private residences.

- D. The PCO will obtain as much information as possible from the alarm company or person calling concerning the location and type of alarm.
- E. Guidelines for responding to alarm calls are covered in the Police Response to Alarms manual and the Montgomery County EOC SOP Manual.

XII. PROPER USE OF EQUIPMENT

- A. Telephones should be used for official business only. Personal calls should be kept to a minimum during a tour of duty, and should never interfere with official business.
- B. Computer equipment should be used for official business only. Personal messages should be kept to a minimum during a tour of duty, and should never interfere with official business.
- C. Unauthorized alterations or modifications to any equipment in the Public Safety Communications Center are strictly forbidden.
- D. Improper use of equipment may lead to disciplinary actions, up to and including dismissal.

XIII. REQUIRED CARE OF PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

- A. The working surfaces of all communications consoles shall be kept clean and free of debris, food items, and liquids that could possibly enter the working mechanisms or electronic circuitry.
- B. Console surfaces shall be cleaned periodically by Public Safety Communications personnel using approved cleaning materials to avoid damage to the equipment.
- C. The consumption of meals in the Public Safety Communications Center is strictly forbidden. With the exception of snack foods such as apples, grapes, etc., all other items of food will not be consumed in the communications center.
- D. All drinks will be consumed from a spill-proof container. Items such as bottled water, sodas in plastic containers may be consumed from the same bottle, however, the cap must be on tightly at all times when not being consumed. No glass containers will be allowed inside the Public Safety Communications Center.
- E. Each Police Communications Operator will be responsible for ensuring that the Public Safety Communications Center is clean and neat at all times. All personnel will ensure that all trash has been placed in appropriate trash receptacles, etc.

XIV. CENTER VISITATION BY DEPARTMENTAL PERSONNEL

- A. Each Police Communications Operator will be responsible for ensuring that all visitation times are kept to "Official Business Only" while working in dispatch. At times, there may be more than one officer inside Public Safety Communications to retrieve paperwork, etc.; however, this should only be for the amount of time needed to complete business.
- B. Any visitors requesting to do sit-alongs inside Public Safety Communications will be approved in advance by the Administrative Services Bureau Commander, Support Services Coordinator or On-Duty Shift Supervisor. Any Police Communications Operator requesting to have a sit-along during shift will obtain advanced approval by contacting either the Administrative Services Bureau Commander or Support Services Coordinator.